

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CIVAIR: QUEBEC AVIATION ISSUES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. QUEBEC'S POLITICAL FERMENT HAS CERTAIN CIVIL AVIATION IMPLICATIONS. EXCEPT POSSIBLY FOR THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SITUATION, HOWEVER, NONE PRESENTLY APPEAR LIKELY TO PRODUCE A SIGNIFICANT CRISIS. THIS MESSAGE, BASED ON RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH FEDERAL AND QUEBEC TRANSPORT OFFICIALS, AS WELL AS AIR CANADA AND OTHER CARRIER EXECUTIVES, OUTLINES SOME OF THE ISSUES AND THEIR STATE OF PLAY. SHORT OF QUEBEC'S SECESSION FROM CANADA, NONE OF THESE QUESTIONS PRESENTLY HAVE DIRECT IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. CIVIL AVIATION INTERESTS, BUT ALL HAVE POTENTIALITIES FOR INDUCING FURTHER EROSION IN THE QUEBEC-CANADA RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. A MAJOR FIGURE IN QUEBEC'S EVOLVING AVIATION POLICY IS ROGER DEMERS, A PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PILOT AND PRESIDENT OF LES GENS DE L'AIR--A "PROFESSIONAL" ASSOCIATION OF FEDERALLY-EMPLOYED CONTROLLERS, PROVINCIAL

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PILOTS, INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE WORKERS AND OTHERS-- WHICH ENJOYS GOQ SUPPORT IN SOME OF ITS LEGAL BATTLES AND APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING AS A STRATEGY BODY WITH RESPECT TO MORE GENERAL AVIATION POLICY. DURING RECENT MEETING WITH EMBASSY TCO, DEMERS EXPLAINED HIS ORGANIZATION'S MAJOR POLICY OBJECTIVE AS THE PROMOTION OF AVIATION EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN QUEBEC

FOR FRANCOPHONES WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO UTILIZE THEIR OWN LANGUAGE IN THEIR WORK. HISTORICALLY, HE POINTED OUT, AVIATION IN QUEBEC HAS BEEN ENGLISH DOMINATED. WHILE SOME FRANCOPHONES HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED, THEIR ROLE HAS BEEN LIMITED AND THEY HAVE HAD TO FUNCTION WITHIN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT. THIS CHARACTERIZATION, HE MAINTAINS, EMBRACES AIR CANADA, THE FEDERAL TRANSPORT AGENCIES, MOST OTHER AIRLINES AND THIRD-LEVEL CARRIERS OPERATING IN THE PROVINCE. FRENCH PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT ONLY IN QUEBECAIR AND, TO A MUCH LESSER EXTENT, NORDAIR, IN OWNERSHIP OF SOME SMALL FLYING SCHOOLS AND FIXED-BASE OPERATORS, AND IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT FLEET (WHICH INCLUDES FOREST FIRE FIGHTING AIRCRAFT AND A FEW EXECUTIVE JETS). THESE REPRESENT A RELATIVELY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL AVIATION PICTURE AND CONSEQUENTLY THE EMPHASIS IS UPON THE ANGLO-DOMINATED AREAS OF WHICH AIR CANADA AND THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT ARE MOST IMPORTANT.

3. BESIDES THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AREA (SUBJECT OF SEPARATE MESSAGE), QUEBEC-BASED PRESSURES ARE DIRECTED PRIMARILY TOWARD AIR CANADA AND EMPHASIZE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. DEMERS EMPHASIZED THAT INCREASED HIRING OF FRANCOPHONE PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL IS A MAJOR OBJECTIVE. COURT CASES ARE BEING FOUGHT IN ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKING CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO FRANCOPHONES UNDER FEDERAL OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT. SEPARATE CASES INVOLVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECOGNITION OF FRENCH AS A COCKPIT LANGUAGE (WHICH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN SITUATIONS WHERE ALL AIRCREW ARE FRANCOPHONE) AND REQUIREMENT FOR TRANSLATION OF AIRCRAFT MANUALS INTO FRENCH SO THAT THIS LANGUAGE MAY BECOME THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM OF THE SHOP FLOOR. THE EXPECTATION IS THAT ACHIEVEMENT OF LINGUISTIC OBJECTIVES WILL CLEAR THE WAY FOR GREATER HIRING AND UPGRADING OF FRANCOPHONE EMPLOYEES TO TOP TECHNICAL LEVELS (E.G., FOREMAN MECHANICS AND PILOTS).

4. BOTH DEMERS AND A PROVINCIAL TRANSPORT MINISTRY EXECUTIVE ALSO NOTED THAT OTHER QUEBEC PRESSURES ARE DEVOTED TO EXPANDING ROLE OF QUEBEC-BASED, THIRD-LEVEL AIR CARRIERS IN PROVIDING SERVICE WITHIN THE PROVINCE. TO THIS END, GOQ HAS ACTIVELY INTERVENED IN CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION (CTC) LICENSING PROCEEDINGS ON BEHALF OF AIR GAVA, A SMALL, QUEBEC-OWNED CARRIER SEEKING OPERATING RIGHTS IN NORTHERN UNGAVA AREA,

AGAINST TWO NORTHERN ONTARIO-BASED CARRIERS SEEKING TO EXPAND THEIR SERVICES EASTWARD. THE PROVINCE HAS STATED CATEGORICALLY TO CTC THAT IT EXPECTS ONLY QUEBEC CARRIERS TO BE LICENSED TO OPERATE IN THE PROVINCE. THIS AIR GAVA INTERVENTION IS, OF COURSE, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF QUEBEC RECOGNITION OF FEDERAL AUTHORITY TO LICENSE ALL AIR TRANSPORT ON A NATIONAL BASIS. BUT, THERE IS AT LEAST ONE INDICATION THAT GOQ MAY DISPUTE THIS POWER. PRESS REPORTED LAST MONTH REMARKS OF PROVINCIAL TRANSPORT MINISTER LESSARD THAT QUEBEC WAS CONSIDERING STEPPING INTO THE AIR

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LICENSING FIELD ITSELF WITH RESPECT TO OPERATIONS WITHIN ITS TERRITORY. HE PROMISED TO SPELL OUT PLANS ALONG THESE LINES IN A TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED LATER THIS YEAR.

5. REACTION TO GENS DE L'AIR AND GOQ INITIATIVES ON PART OF THE AVIATION ESTABLISHMENT IS ONE OF PUZZLEMENT AND LACK OF INTEREST IN MAKING SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL WAYS OF DOING BUSINESS. AIR CANADA AND OTHER CARRIER EXECUTIVES INSIST THEY ARE SIMPLY PROVIDING AIR SERVICES AND HIRE BEST QUALIFIED PEOPLE AVAILABLE. THEY FREQUENTLY ASSERT THAT THEY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND QUALIFIED FRENCH PERSONNEL. (TCO HAS ALSO HEARD OCCASIONAL REMARKS SUGGESTING LACK OF QUEBECOIS TECHNICAL ABILITIES). WITHIN PRIVATE SECTOR THERE DO NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS BY

CARRIERS AND OTHER INDUSTRY GROUPS TO PROVIDE
UPGRADING PROGRAMS. SMALL SIZE OF MOST SUCH ENTITIES
UNDOUBTEDLY IS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR HERE. ON THE
OTHER HAND, AIR CANADA EXECUTIVES INSIST THEY ACTIVELY
RECRUIT MORE THAN PROPORTIONATELY IN QUEBEC, ESPECIALLY
AT SALES, OFFICE AND MECHANIC LEVELS; THAT THEY HAVE
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ACTIVELY INTRODUCED FRENCH LANGUAGE INTO MANY PHASES
OF OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT; AND THAT THEY WOULD
LIKE TO HAVE MORE FRANCOPHONE TOP-LEVEL COLLEAGUES.
AT PRESENT, AIR CANADA AND COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES ARE ENGAGED IN PUBLIC RECRIMINATIONS RE
EXTENT TO WHICH CORPORATION'S ENVIRONMENT ADEQUATELY
FOSTERS FRANCOPHONE OPPORTUNITIES.

6. HOWEVER, FACT REMAINS THAT AIR CANADA--AS MUCH OF
THE AVIATION INDUSTRY--IS STRONGLY ANGLOPHONE. SOME
OF ITS EXECUTIVES WILLING TO TALK FRANKLY ABOUT
QUEBEC PROBLEM, GLOSS OVER PRESENT DAY TENSIONS, BUT
INDICATE THEY CAN READILY FORESEE CARRIER MOVING HEAD
OFFICE TO TORONTO AND CONTINUING OPERATIONS IF QUEBEC
SEPARATES. ONE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT POINTED OUT ALL
QUEBEC-BASED SERVICES--EXCEPT SOME TRANS-ATLANTIC
ONES--ARE MONEY LOSERS AND MAINTAINED MANAGEMENT WOULD
LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO BE ABLE TO PULL COMPLETELY
OUT OF THE PROVINCE, LEAVING IT TO A GOQ-ORGANIZED
CARRIER TO CARRY THE LOSSES. HE FELT EVEN THE PROFITABLE
TRANS-ATLANTIC SERVICES WOULD MAINTAIN THAT STATUS
OPERATING FROM TORONTO, BUT INDICATED THIS WOULD MEAN
ADMITTING MORE FOREIGN CARRIERS THERE , AGGREVATING
CONGESTION PROBLEMS AND INCREASING COMPETITION.

7. FEDERAL AVIATION OFFICIALS ARE GENERALLY UNWILLING
TO DISCUSS QUEBEC ASPECTS OF THEIR OPERATIONS. ONE
CTC MEMBER, HOWEVER, IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH TCO
ALLUDED TO THE GOQ-BACKED AIR GAVA APPLICATION AND
POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE AERONAUTICS
ACT THAT SAID GEOGRAPHIC HEADQUARTERS OF CARRIERS HAD
TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN AWARDING LICENSES. HE
IMPLIED THAT THIS WAS A QUESTION ON WHICH FEDERAL
POLITICAL DIRECTION WOULD BE AWAITED. MOT OFFICIALS
PUT ALL THEIR EMPHASIS ON THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL
SITUATION AND STRESS BOTH THE SAFETY NEED FOR BILINGUAL
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SERVICES IN QUEBEC AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING
AN ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY IT WILL BE ACCEPTED AND
EFFECTIVE. THEY ARE CONSCIOUS OF TODAY'S POLITICAL
CLIMATE AND APPEAR TO BE MOVING ALSO IN THE DIRECTION
OF HAVING ALL QUEBEC AIRSPACE UNDER CONTROL OF TOWERS
LOCATED IN THE PROVINCE, A MOVE WHICH THREATENS
DISRUPTION OF ESTABLISHED PATTERN OF OPERATIONS
AT MONCTON (NEW BRUNSWICK), WHICH HISTORICALLY HAS
BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF EASTERN QUEBEC. ENDERS

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